

# Dovie's Statement About Special Education

Dear SEPAC, thank you for inviting me to share my perspective about special education in Wayland public schools.

First, a bit about me. I'm a parent of a 9th grade student and football player at Wayland High School. We moved to Massachusetts when my son was in elementary school, driving cross-country from California in search of safety and a new life. We're both survivors of domestic violence and, having experienced trauma, it's a condition that impacts my child's learning, health and well-being. Thus, I've advocated for nearly a decade for an appropriate education for my son in elementary, middle and high school. For any family, this can be a lot, but for me- as a single working parent- it's taken on a new meaning. As such, I have great empathy for families navigating the special education process and am proud to participate in SEPAC's annual survey.

In general, I'm an active parent who supports my child and his peers. For example, I served as a classroom parent, chaperone for school events and PTO member. I was a patron for low-income students, providing them with free backpacks, back-to-school supplies, bus transportation for field trips and books they could keep. I was also involved in a search committee for a new principal and volunteered annually for "Read Across America" by reading Dr. Seuss books in Spanish classrooms! Being named an "outstanding" parent volunteer is one of the most meaningful accomplishments in my life and dear to my heart.

For a while, I even worked as a bilingual Spanish-English substitute teacher in K-6 classrooms to be close to my child and emotionally supportive when he needed it most. I did this while working full-time as a union-side labor and employment law attorney, teaching evening classes as a legal studies professor and serving on volunteer boards of directors, such as Affordable Housing Advocates, the American Constitution Society, ABA Immigration Justice Project and La Raza Lawyers. Coincidentally, I was in-house counsel to my faculty union, helping fellow employees get reasonable

accommodations at work when mental and/or physical conditions demanded it. My unique perspective as a substitute teacher, college professor and union lawyer who's knowledgeable about disability laws is currently lacking in the School Committee. I feel I would add a much-needed perspective that would serve students well.

As you can see, juggling several moving parts is something I've always done well. However, when COVID hit, my son was a 7th grader at Wayland Middle School, and it was particularly tough for us and other Wayland families. As a single parent, I was present on a 24/7 basis while my child attended school remotely. Despite many challenges, when given the opportunity by appointment of the Select Board to the Wayland Human Rights, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, I decided to step-up as its first chair. I led a committee of 15 people, which included 4 high school students. I held public meetings, set agendas and policies, guided public comment and collaborated across town agencies. With such an eclectic group of people, my focus was on finding common ground. As such, our decisions were mostly made by unanimous consent after full discussion. I led meetings with no absences, working closely with the Select Board, Town Administrator and other agencies. One of my accomplishments was spearheading the "Domestic Violence as a Human Right" panel, which featured local Wayland experts. One panelist addressed the mental health needs of children facing trauma and services available nearby.

Students with special needs are legally entitled to a quality, individualized education in an accepting and least restrictive environment. These are basic civil rights, and I'm passionate about representing all students in the district to ensure equal opportunity in education. Why? One important reason stems from my childhood. In a family of 6 children, my youngest sibling was born with significant developmental delays. This meant that at age 3, she had an IEP in place and was bussed to school. Still in diapers and strapped into her car seat, this left a big impression on me. Over the years, I accompanied my mother to IEP meetings. My mother is a monolingual Spanish speaker from rural Mexico, and due to poverty, she attended school only through 2nd grade. Throughout my youth, she needed me to interpret while my father was at his job as a restaurant worker. I learned the ins-and-outs of the IEP process at age 12, which was fortified later as I became a lawyer and mother.

In fact, I represented my parents in probate court with regards to their petition for limited conservatorship of my sister. This process allowed my parents to essentially continue as "guardians" and have care, custody, and control of

important decision-making as my sister became a young adult. In that same light, I have dedicated much of my time as a lawyer to helping adults with special needs. For example, I helped people receiving public assistance and SNAP benefits to get exemptions from stringent work requirements that jeopardized their subsistence. I assisted low-income individuals facing crushing debt to protect their Social Security Disability payments through bankruptcy. Beyond that, I did extensive legal work on behalf of HIV+ and homeless individuals, immigrant students, teachers and school committees. I invite you to review my [relevant accomplishments here](#).

During my campaign for School Committee, I've talked with many community members and learned about their hopes and aspirations for students. Wayland schools are at an important crossroads. Now, more than ever, the School Committee needs a qualified leader that's (1) experienced in tackling the complex challenges presently facing the district in special education and as a whole; (2) dedicated to maintaining the high integrity and excellence of schools through delivery of appropriate education; and (3) skilled in listening and working fairly with parents, teachers, school staff, the superintendent, school committee members, etc. to reach common ground. Based on my proven track record, I will be that leader.

What does this mean in clear terms? It means that I'll support implementing the best-researched, most effective methods for special education. It means that I'll solicit feedback from families and educators on a regular basis to understand what they feel is working and not working. It means that I'll host regular office hours to listen, learn and make sure school issues are addressed in a timely manner. Finally, it means that I'll be strong communicator dedicated to complete transparency so Waylanders aren't left in the dark about important School Committee decisions.

I really appreciate your time in reading this statement and look forward to earning your [vote on April 25th](#). I hope to be your partner in boosting our entire district!

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me directly. I'd love to hear from you.

Sincerely,  
Dovie King

WEBLINK TO STATEMENT: <https://www.elect-dovie.com/sepac>